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THE ROLE OF LUCIEN BONAPARTE  
IN THE COUP D'ETAT OF 18-19 BRUMAIRE

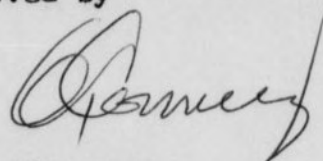
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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is a study of the role of Lucien Bonaparte in the Coup d'État of 18-19 Brumaire. The Coup (9-10 November 1799) was a turning point in the Revolutionary period which dominates the history of France. The question about Lucien's importance to the Coup is one still open to exploration; and it is this problem I am examining in this paper. There are two main questions which will be handled within the paper. First: Were Lucien's actions essential to the success of the coup or was he merely a secondary figure? Second: Were Lucien's actions in line with his past behavior or did he act differently than one might have predicted; and if there was a shift in his behavior, is there some sensible explanation for it? The coup will be viewed as the stage for Lucien, Napoleon's younger brother, and president of the Cinq-Cents (The Council of Five Hundred), the lower house of the Directory's legislature.

## L. BACKGROUND OF THE DIRECTORY

To trace the history of the French Revolution from the preparation of the cahiers to the coup of 18-19 Brumaire would add nothing to this study but extra pages. The most appropriate place to begin seems to be in August, 1795, with the drafting of the Constitution of the Year III. Attacks by France's enemies were quite severe, and this external confusion seemed only to increase internal instability. It was hoped that a new Constitution would unite France and help to alleviate her internal and external problems.<sup>1</sup> Within the preface of the Constitution there was a declaration of the rights of the citizen which omitted all references to the right of rebellion. The necessity to safeguard the rights of private property was stressed; and property qualifications for voters were reaffirmed.

The Corps législatif which was composed of two councils, the Council of Ancients (or Elders) and the Council of Five hundred (Cinq-Cents), was to be the legislative branch.

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<sup>1</sup>The new Constitution was acceptable; however supplementary decrees to it provoked many Frenchmen. These decrees stated that two-thirds of the old members of the Convention should be selected to serve in the new councils. A large number of men marched on the Tuileries on October 5, 1795 in protest to these decrees; and it was here that Napoleon Bonaparte delivered his "whiff of grape shot." Bonaparte's action not only dispersed the mob but also created a name for him and opened the way to future fame and power.



The two councils were to meet separately, with initiation and discussion of bills restricted to the men within the Five Hundred and adoption or rejection of them by the Ancients. The executive power was to be handled by five Directors chosen by the Ancients from a list of fifty nominees drawn up by the Cinq-Cents. One of the five men was to act as presiding officer for three months, the others to follow in rotation. The Directors had no control over legislation nor over financial matters. The Councils had no power to dismiss the Directors; and the Directors could neither adjourn nor dissolve the Councils, a fact which was to be quite significant during Brumaire. Although careful planning had gone into the establishment of this new government which took office on October 27, 1795, there was absolutely no means to guarantee cooperation between executive Directory and the two Councils. This loop-hole which may not have been felt then became increasingly more noticeable as the new government began to function.

The first five Directors chosen by the Ancients were La Révellière-Lépeaux, Reubell, Letourneur, Barras and Siéyès. Siéyès declined. He had previously proposed constitutional articles that would have weakened the authority of the state. He blamed the new regime for his failure and withdrew to the sidelines to become its gravedigger, and Lazare Nicolas Marguerite Carnot was appointed in his place.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Georges Lefebvre, The French Revolution from 1793-1799, trans. J. H. Stewart and J. Friguglietti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 173.

With the election of Germinal, Year V, the first one under the new form of government, shifts began to occur within the Directory. On May 20, 1797, Letourneur was replaced by the diplomat François Barthélemy, a constitutional monarchist. During the spring of 1797, royalist support and agitation grew and the election of 1797 saw many royalists sitting in the two Councils. Three Directors ( Reubell, La Révellière-Lépeaux, and Barras ) were strongly opposed to any signs of royalist strength within the legislative branch. General Augereau, one of Napoleon's envoys, was put in command of the Paris garrison; and on the morning of 18 Fructidor Year V (September 4, 1797), by order of the three Directors mentioned above, General Augereau and his troops moved into the Tuileries. A rump of the two Councils was later convoked, and the election of some two hundred councilors was nullified. Barthélemy and Carnot were expelled from the Directory, condemned to deportation, and replaced by Merlin de Douai and François de Neufchâteau. The Directory had triumphed against the royalist forces but only with the aid of troops. The constitution had been violated and only a very precarious balance was established. By using the support of the army, would the Directory at some later date be able to curb the ambitions of some of the generals? The fear of military intervention was again to be considered when plans were being formulated for Brumaire.

As the election of the Year VI approached, concern

again mounted. The Directory was not eager to have Jacobins in control just as they a year before had been opposed to having a royalist majority in control. When the elections were finished, Jacobin support had greatly increased. The law of 22 Floréal Year VI (May 11, 1798), was subsequently passed. This law annulled the elections in eight departments where there had been only Jacobin candidates elected. These vacant seats were then filled by men whom the Directors felt had ideas similar to their own. On May 15, the Directory of Neufchâteau was replaced by Jean Baptist Treilhard. The Directory had survived its second coup and it seemed to be attaining more and more power. But how long could a government last which existed only by continually purging its enemies? Authority which cannot assimilate factions is always at the mercy of the appearance of a new power-seeking faction.

With the election of 1799 approaching, tension once again was felt among the Directors. Recent military defeats during the spring in Italy and severe losses in both Switzerland and Holland were being blamed on the Directors, and the election saw a republican majority returned to the two Councils. The Directory realizing that external matters had considerably weakened its position did not dare to repeat its tactics of the preceding Floréal. The new republican majority in the councils opened fire upon their opponents in the Directory. Reubell had retired and was replaced by the Abbé Siéyès, a known enemy of the Directory and a man who



favored altering the Constitution. On June 16, 1799, Treilhard was replaced by Louis Antoine Gohier, a man who had been Minister of Justice in the Year II and was in 1799, still considered to be a Jacobin. Siéyès and Barras began to apply pressure on La Révellière-Lépeaux and Merlin to resign so they would avoid indictment by the Corps législatif. On June 30, they yielded and were replaced by Roger-Ducos and Jean François Moulin. The 30th of Prairial Year VIII, was then not actually a coup d'etat. It restored temporary control to the Councils over the Directory; however, it did not completely subordinate or weaken the Directory. One notices that after Prairial Year VIII, the resurrection of the Jacobin Club began. The Jacobins were denied the right to circulate petitions but could make public addresses. Any attempt to solicit new members was forbidden; however, spontaneous joining was permitted. The ambiguous way in which the Jacobins were handled suggests that opposition to their activities was quite minor.<sup>3</sup> With France under heavy attack on most of her frontiers, there was a return to the attitudes reminiscent of those during the time of the Terror. Threats of internal subversion were circulated and the levée en masse was again put into operation.

The political situation did not appear to be at all stable. To make matters worse the Directory was at this time

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<sup>3</sup> ~~Alphonse~~ <sup>Albert</sup> Aulard, The French Revolution, trans. Bernard Mirall (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), IV, p. 130.

quite ineffectual. The only man who seemed to exhibit any genuine concern was Siéyès and he was dreaming of a new republic. Feeling that the majority in the Councils would not take the initiative to institute a coup even if they recognized the fact that it was indispensable, Siéyès realized that he would have to rely on the military to achieve his dream. Roger-Ducos was the only other Director who seemed to concur with Siéyès and his ideas on revision; however, this signifies nothing of real importance for Ducos was a rather shallow person who lacked any genuine imagination and merely voiced the opinions of others.<sup>4</sup> Siéyès saw that he needed the assistance of a military man to make his dream a reality. With this in mind, Siéyès had the young General Joubert sent to Novi (in Italy) to gain the national fame which at that moment he lacked. Unfortunately, Joubert was killed in battle, and the épée which Siéyès was seeking did not seem to exist.<sup>5</sup>

Toward the middle of October, 1799, France was victorious on the battle field. Suvorov and his Russian troops were forced to retreat to the Rhine and on October 18, the Duke of York signed an evacuation agreement pertaining to Holland.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>5</sup>The information in the two preceding paragraphs was drawn from various books: ~~Albert~~ Aulard, The French Revolution, trans. Bernard Mirall (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), IV; Leo Gershoy, The French Revolution and Napoleon (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1933); Adolphe Thiers, Le Consulat et l'Empire, trans. D. Forbes Campbell and H. W. Herbert (Philadelphia: E. Claxton and Company, 1883).

Naturally, victories tended to raise the spirits of the men in Paris. As if victories were not enough, news reached Paris that on October 9, Napoleon Bonaparte, the hero of Egypt had landed at Fréjus and was travelling toward Paris. Frenchmen everywhere seemed to throw themselves at Napoleon's feet as the savior who had finally arrived after four years of internal confusion. It is not really surprising that the French after suffering the ill success of the directoral constitution should throw themselves into the arms of a young general who had been victorious in Italy and Egypt and whose glimpses of ambition did not alarm the nation but were hailed with hope.<sup>6</sup> Here was the sword Siéyès had been seeking, a military man around whom everyone was willing to gather. Why then does Lucien Bonaparte in his Mémoires relate Siéyès' concern about Napoleon's return; what makes this man who is anxious to see change shudder at the presence of a man who represents change? Siéyès made a statement concerning General Bernadotte which can also explain why Siéyès was apprehensive about Napoleon. It is:

... si un homme est indispensable dans une République, on doit l'en regarder comme le plus dangereux ennemi, et s'en défaire par tous les moyens.<sup>7</sup>

Napoleon was too mighty a sword for what was needed, yet Siéyès realized that he must secure his assistance and

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<sup>6</sup>Thiers, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Albert Ollivier, Le Dix-huit Brumaire (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1959), p. 135.

employed Lucien Bonaparte's help to approach Napoleon with his ideas. On the tenth of Brumaire, Napoleon and Siéyès met at Lucien's home for their first formal meeting concerning the forthcoming coup.<sup>8</sup> Except for that evening as host, Lucien did very little to handle the actual preparations or to strengthen relations between the soldier and the Directorate. It was felt by Siéyès that Lucien would be most instrumental in handling the Cinq-Cents.

One of the men most effective in uniting Siéyès and Napoleon prior to the coup was Talleyrand who had resigned on January 1, 1799, as Minister of Foreign Affairs but returned to Napoleon.<sup>9</sup> Some feel Talleyrand did this because he wanted to be in the government which was then in its planning stages and to find a means to reacquire his portfolio and return to glory.<sup>10</sup> In attempting to secure the cooperation of Siéyès and Napoleon, Talleyrand remarked to

Vous voulez mettre en action les plans que vous avez enfantés, et Bonaparte ne veut qu' une garantie contre les Jacobins et une poste dans lequel il soit a' l'abri de leurs coups. Unissez-

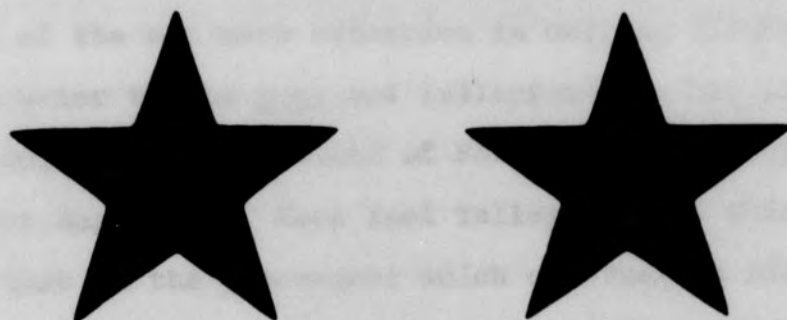
<sup>8</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte, (Bruxelles: Societe Typographique Belge, 1845), II, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Emile Dard, Napoleon and Talleyrand, trans. Christopher R. Turner, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Madelin, Talleyrand (New York: Roy Publishers, 1948), p. 72.



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<sup>10</sup> Louis Madelin, Talleyrand (New York: Roy Publishers, 1948), p. 72.

vous à lui, il vous donnera les moyens d'exécution que vous manquent et vous lui assurerez la place qu'il cherche.<sup>11</sup>

Advice was not one-sided. In another conversation Talleyrand said to Napoleon, "Vous voulez du pouvoir et Siéyès veut une nouvelle constitution. Unissez-vous pour détruire ce qui et puisque ce qui est un obstacle pour tous les deux."<sup>12</sup> The question here is not what Talleyrand's motivations were to weld a union between the Director and the soldier; the fact is that he was among the most influential in seeing that it was done. Had it not been for men such as Talleyrand, the fourth coup d'état under the Directory might never have taken place.<sup>13</sup> The immediate preparations for the coup will be handled later. Here, the political turbulence of the Directory has been described with the hope that one will have acquired the sense of turmoil which existed prior to 18-19 Brumaire.

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<sup>11</sup> Georges Lacour-Gayet, Talleyrand (Paris: Fayot, 1928), p. 354.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Talleyrand's work in this coup did not prove beneficial to him as he had assumed it might. On November 22, 1799 a decree was published which appointed Talleyrand the new Foreign Minister under the Consulate.

## II. FROM CORSICA TO THE CINQ-CENTS

Lucien Bonaparte was born in the small town of Ajaccio on the island of Corsica on May 21, 1775. Five years younger than Napoleon and seven years younger than the oldest son, Joseph, Lucien spent his earliest years separated from his older brothers who were in school in France. He was a bright quick-witted boy with a great deal of his father's charm and very little of his mother's restraint. Although quite willful and self-assured even in his youngest years, he had a very loving heart which made his mother extremely fond of him.<sup>1</sup> At the age of seven, Lucien was enrolled at the school of Autun in France, and in 1784, he went to the military school at Brienne where Napoleon was also a student. Being the younger brother, Lucien resented Napoleon's attempts to advise and direct him.<sup>2</sup> Some have claimed that this year spent together generated much of the repugnance Lucien always felt to bending before the will of his imperious brother.<sup>3</sup> Although still quite young, Lucien had an unusually strong sense of his own importance. He considered himself as being

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<sup>1</sup>Theo Aronson, The Golden Bees (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1964), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>A. Hilliard Atteridge, Napoleon's Brothers (London: Methuen & Co., 1909), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Geer, Napoleon and his Family, Vol. I: Corsica Madrid 1769-1809 (New York: Brentano's 1927), p. 12.

the statesman of the family and, perhaps, for this reason he always seemed in constant revolt against Napoleon's efforts to control him.<sup>4</sup> In 1789, Lucien returned to Ajaccio where he became interested in revolutionary activities. Here is where he first began his oratorical career and learned the techniques to arouse interest in his ideas. In March, 1793, after leaving Corsica because of political disagreements between himself and Paoli the revolutionary leader of Corsica, Lucien arrived in Toulon, France and joined the local Jacobin Club. On April 3, 1793, Lucien delivered a fiery speech in which he denounced Paoli who had recently betrayed the revolutionary cause. This speech caused a vendetta to be issued against the Bonaparte family and they were forced to flee Corsica and to establish themselves in France. One is not able to determine if Lucien assessed the danger in which he placed his family by making such a speech. It is highly questionable since he has been described at this point as being ". . . restless, ambitious, undisciplined, always acting on the first impulse of the moment . . ."<sup>5</sup> During the summer of 1793, Lucien was appointed as one of the storekeepers at the supply depot at St. Maximin, a town twenty-four miles north of Toulon. While living at St. Maximin, Lucien renewed his oratorical successes. To demonstrate his

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<sup>4</sup>Atteridge, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup>Geer, op. cit., p. 30.



sympathy for the current political beliefs, he took the fine old Republican name of Brutus. He was elected president of the local Jacobin Club and also president of the local Revolutionary committee.<sup>6</sup>

Lucien's sojourn in Saint Maximin brought him more than oratorical practice for on May 4, 1794, he was married to Catherine Boyer, the sister of an innkeeper with whom Lucien had lodged. Shortly after his marriage, he left Saint Maximin and went to Saint Chaumans where his employer was an army contractor. He had the task of inspecting and generally supervising the preparation of the horses and carts which were to be used in delivering supplies to the Army of Italy. Although this position was different than what Lucien had done in Saint Maximin, it was equally dull to a young man with such a quick, inquisitive mind. In July, 1795, Lucien was arrested.<sup>7</sup> The municipality at Saint Maximin was no longer Jacobin and had lodged an accusation against him on grounds of his proceedings during the days when he was known

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<sup>6</sup>It was at this time that Lucien wrote to his brother Joseph about Napoleon's success at Toulon. Part of this letter is cited here to indicate Lucien's feelings toward his older brother.

"... I am convinced that, if he were subject to no restrictions, he would be a dangerous man. . . . he is quite capable of playing turncoat to serve his personal interest. . . . one day I shall tell him to his face exactly what I think of him, for my mind is far too firmly made up to permit my following any ideas other than my own. . . ." Aronson, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>Lucien refers to his arrest in his Mémoires; however, he gives no date except for the month. (Lucien Bonaparte, Mémoires of Lucien Bonaparte (Bruxelles: Societe Typographique Belge, 1836), 1, pp. 57-61).



as Brutus Bonaparte. Members of his family exerted themselves "on behalf of the black sheep of the family" and he was soon released from prison.<sup>8</sup>

In October, 1795, Lucien was sent to the southern part of France with Citizen Fréron as part of a roving commission to deal with reactionaries and malcontents. After the completion of this mission, Napoleon found Lucien a job as Commissary with the Army of the North in The Netherlands. For a man of his "conscious political genius", this was rather a dull job and in April, 1796, Lucien deserted.<sup>9</sup> There were no repercussions following Lucien's desertion, and Napoleon used his influence to get him appointed Commissary at Milan; however, after a few weeks, Lucien left Milan and was on his way to Paris where he felt there was real activity. It appears that Lucien's potential to stimulate and harass was then quite noticeable for after only a short time in Paris, Carnot who was then head of the war office, had him sent off to the Commissariat of the Army of the Rhine.<sup>10</sup> Completing this particular assignment, Lucien was sent home to Corsica in October, 1796. After much procrastination, he finally arrived there in March, 1797.

Not able to keep out of politics, Lucien finally managed to get himself elected as a Corsican deputy to the Council

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<sup>8</sup>Atteridge, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-33.

of Five Hundred. Lucien states in his Mémoires that, "j'avais été nommé à l'unanimité."<sup>11</sup> The fact that he was too young even to stand for election (he was twenty-three and a candidate had to be at least twenty-five) was conveniently glossed over and he took his seat in the Cinq-Cents on April 12, 1798.<sup>12</sup> Soon after Lucien's election, his brother Joseph commented on his younger brother's behavior:

Mon frere Lucien encore dans la première jeunesse, venait d'entrer au conseil des Cinq-Cents. N'ayant pas entendu Napoleon avant son embarquement, il n'était pas aussi persuadé que moi de la nécessité absolue de rester en bon accord avec le Directoire; aussi ne cacha-t-il pas toujours le blâme que méritait la conduite des directeurs.<sup>13</sup>

While Joseph notes Lucien's tendency to remain firm in his beliefs rather than support those ideas which might perhaps be most beneficial to him politically, a recent historian points to the wide range which his attacks took: "Il avait tout d'abord tenu des discours contradictoires: tantôt il attaquait les catholiques, tantôt les royalists, tantôt les jacobins."<sup>14</sup> For a year, Lucien dominated much of the activity in the Cinq-Cents with his provocative and dynamic orations. Like many others, he had shifted attitudes and sides many times since 1789. As one historian says, "Son

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<sup>11</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, op. cit., I, p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> Aronson, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Mémoires et Correspondance Politique et Militaire du Roi Joseph, (Paris: Perrotin Libraire-Editeur, 1855), I, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Thiry, Le Coup d'état de 18 Brumaire (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1947), p. 43.

passé en fait un jacobin, sa tendance nouvelle en ferait un constitutionnel, son intérêt immédiat le pousse à soutenir le gouvernement..."<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising that Lucien became a well-known figure around Paris for as his biographer has stated, "il n'a pour lui que son indéniable facilité de parole, une intelligence extrêmement vive, et enfin, pour ne rien gâter, le renom de son frère, dont il a soin, d'ailleurs, de ne jamais souffler mot."<sup>16</sup> On October 10, 1799 (24 Vendémiaire), after being in Egypt for over a year, Napoleon entered Paris. Eight days later on October 24, 1799 (2 Brumaire), Lucien Bonaparte was elected President of the Cinq-Cents. It seems strange that a young man who had been recently fluctuating from one opinion to another (backing the Constitution of the Year III to supporting the plans for a new government) should be elected to this important position. Ollivier offers an explanation which appears quite sound. He says:

L'élection de ce dernier, malgré ses vingt-quatre ans, malgré ses revirements, tient sans aucun doute beaucoup à son nom, à la rentree du frère glorieux. Pour certains, élire Lucien doit être une manière de se débarrasser de Napoleon.<sup>17</sup>

One must look briefly at Lucien's affairs in Paris before one completes the narrative of his activities prior to Brumaire. Realizing the deficiencies of the Directory and

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<sup>15</sup> François Fierté, Lucien Bonaparte (Paris: Plon, 1939), p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Albert Ollivier, Le Dix-huit Brumaire (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1959), p. 164.

feeling a necessity to abide by the existing constitution, Lucien began to cultivate the acquaintance of the Abbé Siéyès at this time one of the Directors.<sup>18</sup> Jean Thiry asks the puzzling question about this point in Lucien's life. "Quelle était alors son ambition?"<sup>19</sup> Was he anxious to secure a position in the new government if the planned coup were successful or was he simply trying to serve his country with no personal gains in mind? Thiry says:

Nul ne le sait, mais le retour de son frère devait modifier ses projets, car il ne pouvait s'engager à deviner son adversaire. Il lui fallait donc s'entendre avec lui et combiner ses efforts avec les siens.<sup>20</sup>

Lucien's life has been followed up to the day of his election to the Presidency of the Council of the Five Hundred. One has seen him progress in political circles allowing little to block his way. He was persistent and would not settle for an appointment if he felt it contrary to what he desired. Lucien was not a man ignored by those in influential positions and he did not allow an influential person to dictate his actions. All this should be remembered when he is later viewed as one of the participants during the coup of 18-19 Brumaire.

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<sup>18</sup>Louis Madelin, The French Revolution (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), p. 597.

<sup>19</sup>Jean Thiry, Le Coup d'état de 18 Brumaire (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1947), p. 43.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.



### III. THE DAYS OF 18-19 BRUMAIRE

Before dealing specifically with Lucien's activities during 18-19 Brumaire, a concise review of the actual events of the two days, and a few incidents prior to these days seems necessary for clarity. As stated earlier, the first meeting of Napoleon and Siéyès took place at Lucien Bonaparte's home on the evening of the tenth of Brumaire. Here, tentative plans were made for the coup and another meeting was tentatively set for the twelfth of Brumaire when the exact day for the coup was to be determined.<sup>1</sup> This meeting was postponed until the evening of the fifteenth and was to be held after a banquet which was given by the Corps législatif in honor of Napoleon Bonaparte and General Moreau. Emotions were running quite high among those at the banquet, and all toasts made glorified the French Republic and her supporters. No one wished to appear to be a traitor or at all suspect. In the center of the temple (the banquet was held at the Temple de la Victoire which had formally been the church of Saint-Sulpice) a large banner had been hung with the inscription, "Soyez unis, vous serez vainqueurs!" unity, victory,

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<sup>1</sup>The plans, as they finally appeared, were for the Corps législatif to be moved to Saint-Cloud and to have Napoleon appointed commander of the Paris troops. Once at Saint-Cloud a provisional government was to take authority immediately and a legislative commission was to prepare a new constitution which was to be subsequently voted on by the French people.



and fidelity were the words of the evening.

Siéyès, however, was worried. After the banquet, he and Napoleon had decided that the coup should take place on the 18th of Brumaire. There were about twenty deputies in the Cinq-Cents whom Siéyès did not wish to receive notice of the transfer to Saint-Cloud.<sup>2</sup> These twenty were men whom Siéyès felt to be the strongest Jacobins, and he felt their presence might cause disorder and defeat his scheme.<sup>3</sup>

Napoleon and Lucien thought otherwise, however, and insisted that they did not wish to provoke unnecessary hostility when they had adequate support. As events will show, Napoleon and his brother were a little ~~too~~ over-confident and they dismissed a warning which if heeded might have eliminated much of the chaos which was to occur.

The plans were set now and the only thing to do was to wait. The days of the sixteenth and seventeenth of Brumaire were ones of many intimate conferences. Lemer cier, then president of the Council of Ancients, and Lucien Bonaparte, president of the Cinq-Cents, spent the two days confirming sufficient support in their respective groups. At 7 a.m. on the eighteenth, a large number of generals began to arrive at Napoleon's home. All had been invited individually under

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<sup>2</sup> Because the meeting of the Councils on the eighteenth of Brumaire was to be sudden, notices were to be sent to the legislators informing them of the meeting. It was hoped that without prior warning, resistance would be kept at a minimum.

<sup>3</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte (Bruxelles: Societe Typographique Belge, 1845), II, p. 65.

the pretense of a review; and as the group continued to grow, they were surprised to see such a large gathering. In handling the military, Napoleon was taking no unnecessary chances; he wanted its strength behind him. One man had not come in uniform: this was Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, a past Minister of War. Bernadotte had achieved his success under Republican institutions and he was sincere in his attachment to them. For this reason, he had remained aloof from Napoleon and his plans.<sup>4</sup> Napoleon extracted a promise from Bernadotte that morning that he would not harangue any troops or mount his horse without orders from some high authority.<sup>5</sup> A possible attempt by the military to disrupt the coup had thus been averted. While Napoleon wooed the generals, Talleyrand, accompanied by Admiral Bruix, called upon Barras to try and persuade him to resign his seat on the Directory. Barras had resisted pressure to this point; however, when he saw from his windows troops marching toward the Tuileries, he sat down and wrote his resignation.<sup>6</sup> Gohier and Moulin, the two remaining Directors, ~~also~~ would not express approval of Bonaparte's actions. "L'obstination des deux Directeurs n'était pas dangereuse. ... Mais c'était

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Dunbar Plunket Barton, Bernadotte and Napoleon (London: J. Murray, 1921), pp. 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Dard, op. cit., p. 31.

à eux, c'était autour de leur nom que les opposants pourraient se rallier.<sup>7</sup> On the morning of the eighteenth, General Moreau held these two men prisoners to avoid any active opposition on their part. All anticipated interruptions had been eliminated and everything seemed ready. While Napoleon was conferring with the generals, Mathieu Augustin Cornet (an inspector in the Council of Ancients) was addressing a select group of the Council of Ancients and acquainting them with terrorist plans which had developed in the past days.<sup>8</sup> To protect the Councils, Regnier, a colleague of Cornet's, moved that they change their meeting place to Saint-Cloud and also that Napoleon Bonaparte be appointed commander of the Paris troops. The first suggestion was legal for such authority was granted to the Ancients under Articles 102, 103, and 104 of the Constitution of Year III. The second suggestion was illegal for the right to make such appointments lay only with the Directory. Since all generals were at this moment with Napoleon; and the Directors who were opposed were held prisoners, no opposition was evident and the two motions carried. At eleven o'clock at the Palais-Bourbon, the Cinq-Cents met to hear its president, Lucien Bonaparte, read the decrees he had just received from the

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Bainville, Le 18 brumaire (Paris: Hachette, 1925), p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> This was not true, but used as the justification for suggesting that the two councils moved to Saint-Cloud. (Lefebvre, op. cit., p. 255.)

Ancients. After he finished, there were many shouts of "Vive la Republique: Vive la Constitution:" Lucien dismissed the Cinq-Cents without offering any explanation to the legislators; and as he states in his Mémoires, "Ainsi s'écoula la journée du 18 brumaire."<sup>9</sup>

On the morning of the nineteenth of brumaire, both Councils gathered at Saint-Cloud (the assembly hall), which was surrounded by troops. The rooms where they were to meet were not ready when the men arrived, and as one author says: "Les conversations s'engageaient fiévreuse ment, et c'est alors que les inconvenients et le danger du retard commencent à se signaler."<sup>10</sup> Finally, the rooms were ready. Within the Council of Ancients, loud protests were being voiced by those members who had been absent on the previous day; Napoleon intervened but became flustered and could not quiet them. In the Cinq-Cents, the situation was still worse. A motion to form a commission which would carefully study the constitutionality of the decrees (those which had been received on the previous day) was on the floor, and while Lucien sought to discourage this and avoid a roll call vote on the formation of such a commission, Napoleon entered the Orangerie (the room in which the Cinq-Cents was meeting). Immediately there were shouts of "hors la loi" and confusion became paramount. Seeing Napoleon in danger,

<sup>9</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, op. cit., II, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Vandal, L'avènement de Bonaparte (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1903), I, p. 357.



Generals Murat, Lefebvre, and Gardanne with a small number of their soldiers moved toward him.

Finalement, quatre grenadiers parviennent à entourer Bonaparte et à le protéger. Un officier le saisit par les épaules pour le soutenir et le diriger vers la sortie. Il est suffoquant, presque évanoui et sur sa figure extrêmement pâle, des boutons griffés ont laissé un peu de sang.<sup>11</sup>

Lucien attempted to establish order but failed. He then left and joined his brother outside. Mounting a horse, and addressing the gathered troops, Lucien denounced the traitors within the Cinq-Cents, vowed to kill his own brother if he attempted to destroy or endanger the liberty of Frenchmen, and asked the troops to dispel the traitors inside. A detachment of the garde législative under General Leclerc's command forced the evacuation of the Orangerie. Thus the coup was completed. In the evening, a small number of men drew up the outlines of what was to be the Consulate.

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Now with the events of the coup before us, we may examine Lucien's actions more closely noting not only what Lucien says of his role, but what others have said about it. The nineteenth of Brumaire will be the day which will be dealt with since it is on this day that the action really occurred. The descriptions will be varied; however, in this case variety yields some evidence as to the perplexity of the questions presented at the beginning of this study. First, a few statements as to how Lucien appeared and acted

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<sup>11</sup> Ollivier, op. cit., pp. 214-215.



on the morning of the 19th when he first entered the Orangerie.

Sorel says:

Lucien préside: c'est un tout jeune homme: vingt-quatre ans, la physionomie expressive, distinguée; une belle taille, avantageuse; mai le masque roman et le costume des grands spectacles révolutionnaires, à la Saint-Just, sont gâtés par des lunettes; Lucien est myope, sa voix nasillarde est voilée et sans timbre; ses discours ont du trait, de la chaleur, sa parole ne porte pas. Il est assailli de motions.<sup>12</sup>

Lucien's biographer has a rather similar view:

Sa conversation est agreable, avec de l'esprit et du trait. Sa voix est sans timbre, un peu voilee et meme nasale, mais la prononciation est nette, le debit juste, et il a beaucoup de chaleur et de sentiment.<sup>13</sup>

Gaudin had put before the Council the motion to establish a commission to study the decrees and Lucien " ... multiple en vain les rappels à l'ordre; malgre sa rare presence d'esprit et son courage avisé, il lutte très difficilement contre le torrent."<sup>14</sup> As Lucien was trying to quiet a roomful of men who were quite angry because they had been denied their vote, Napoleon entered. Lucien makes reference to this action in his Mémoires: "Là, mon frère hasarda audacieusement la plus mauvaise manoeuvre qu'il eût jamais faite."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Albert Sorel, L'Europe et La Revolution Francaise (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1903), V, p. 478.

<sup>13</sup>Piétri, op. cit., p. 81. (Since this book follows the publication of Sorel, it is very possible that Piétri is merely paraphrasing Sorel. Because Piétri fails to footnote much of his work, a direct connection can be made.)

<sup>14</sup>Albert Vandal, L'avènement de Bonaparte (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1903), I, p. 359.

<sup>15</sup>Lucien Bonaparte, op. cit., II, p. 96.

While the cries of "hors la loi:" increased, Lucien remained seated, tried to calm the assembly, " ... allègue que le général avait sans doute à rendre compte d'une affaire pressante et le défend de son mieux."<sup>16</sup> Lucien's attempts to establish order were all in vain. The shouting was intensified. What Lucien did during this confusion is seen quite differently by two historians. Vandal says:

Contre cette irruption, Lucien merveilleux de sang-froid, couvert, très digne, se défend; pour un miracle d'énergie, il parvient à contenir les assaillants, à dégager même la position, à dominer un instant le tumulte et à se faire entendre.<sup>17</sup>

Ollivier, on the other hand, paints a much poorer picture:

Lucien s'effondre les larmes aux yeux, croyant que tout est fini par son frère, que le décret contre lui se trouve voté.<sup>18</sup>

If the sentiments of the men who wished to outlaw Napoleon spread, the day would be a victory for the Jacobins. As the confusion increased, Napoleon was led from the room and Lucien again attempted to address the assembly. What he then did Sorel describes:

Alors Lucien, qui se montra, en cet instant, grand acteur politique, fait un geste théâtral: "il n'y a plus de liberté! En signe de deuil public, votre président dépose les marques de sa magistrature." Mais l'effet manqua; les députés entourèrent Lucien, les bousculèrent, essayèrent de le jeter à bas de la tribune.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Fiétri, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>17</sup>Vandal, op. cit., p. 375.

<sup>18</sup>Ollivier, op. cit., p. 217.

<sup>19</sup>Sorel, op. cit., p. 482.

Lucien then turned the presidency over to Chazal (past president of the Cinq-Cents), left the tribune, and whispered to Frégevillle (an inspector within the Cinq-Cents), that he must go and advise Napoleon that if the session were not suspended within ten minutes Lucien would no longer accept any responsibility for what developed. Within a few minutes, troops entered the Orangerie to assist Lucien in his attempt to leave. Bainville describes the scene:

Chazal ... s'adressant à Lucien, lui dit qu'il vient le délivrer et lui demande de le suivre. Soit qu'il fut épuisé par ses efforts, soit qu'il eût une défiance, Lucien ne répondit pas. Il semblait même ne pas voir. Alors le capitaine le prit sous les bras, le porta presque, avec un grand respect (comme un corps saint) puis le fit sortir entouré des dix grenadiers.<sup>20</sup>

Fouché relates in his Mémoires that Lucien was amazed to learn that the soldiers had been sent in by Napoleon.<sup>21</sup> This seems rather strange when Lucien himself states he sent for assistance.<sup>22</sup>

Although the way Lucien reached his brother is seen differently by various people, there is agreement about what subsequently occurred. Lucien entered the courtyard screaming, "Un cheval pour moi et un roulement de tambour."<sup>23</sup> Mounted

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<sup>20</sup> Bainville, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> Mémoires Relating to Fouché, trans. E. Jules Meras (New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1912), p. 80.

<sup>22</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, op. cit., II, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup> Sorel, op. cit., p. 483.

next to his brother, Lucien delivered a fiery speech to the soldiers around him:

Le président du Conseil des Cinq-Cents vous déclare que l'immense majorité de ce Conseil est pour le moment sous le terreur de quelque représentants à stylets qui assiègent la tribune, présentent la mort à leurs collègues et enlèvent les délibérations les plus affreuses. Je vous déclare que ces audacieux brigands, sans doute soldés par l'Angleterre, se sont mis en rébellion contre le Conseil des Anciens et ont osé parler de mettre hors la loi le général chargé de l'exécution de son décret. Je vous déclare que ce petit nombre de furieux se sont mis eux-mêmes hors la loi par leurs attentats contre la liberté de ce Conseil ... Ces brigands ne sont plus les représentants du peuple, mais les représentants du poignard.<sup>24</sup>

This speech, reminiscent of the Jacobin style, was not all true; however, it was powerful and served to excite the troops.<sup>25</sup> Seeing that more was needed to provoke evacuation of the Orangerie, Lucien found "... le geste décisif, la pantomime irresistible. Il se fait donner un épée nue, dont il tend la point vers la poitrine de Bonaparte, et dans cette pose tragique, ... jure qu'il tuera de sa main son frère, si celui-ci attente jamais à la liberté des Français."<sup>26</sup> The troops were impressed and reassured; into the Orangerie they marched and expelled the Cinq-Cents. The military which had been originally considered as only a reserve force was

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<sup>24</sup>Vandal, op. cit., pp. 386-387.

<sup>25</sup>The men who opposed Napoleon were not connected with the English; however, Great Britain was a national enemy and any association with her was extremely distasteful to the French. Lucien was clever enough to think of this.

<sup>26</sup>Vandal, op. cit., p. 387.



ultimately what made the coup a success. That evening Lucien met in the orangerie with a rump session of the two Councils. After they had completed their business, Lucien said, " ... la liberté née dans le jeu de paume de Versailles, fut consolidée dans l'orangerie de Saint-Cloud! Les constituants de 89 furent les pères de la révolution! Les législateurs de l'an viii furent les pacificateurs de la patrie."<sup>27</sup> Lucien's role was completed and he ended the two days on a triumphal note. Fate would determine if his statement were true.

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<sup>27</sup> Lucien Bonaparte, op. cit., II, p. 153.

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Staël, op. cit., p. 72.



#### IV. EVALUATION OF LUCIEN'S ROLE

It is now time to answer the questions presented at the beginning of this study. First: Was Lucien's role essential to the success of the coup? Yes, his role was essential; but this must be somewhat qualified. It was hoped by many of the men involved that Lucien would be able to control any confusion which arose in the Cinq-Cents. Here, he failed and perhaps his lack of precaution prior to 18 Brumaire (when he refused to have certain members of the Cinq-Cents expelled from the meeting at Saint-Cloud) proved to be a bigger error than any had assumed it might be. As one historian has said: "Lucien, devenu président par un sorte de surprise, n'ignorait pas que la séance serait chaude. Mais la précaution qu'il avait prise pour détourner l'orage devait être inutile."<sup>1</sup> Because Lucien demonstrated so little authority or command while within the Orangerie, it seems fairly safe to state that another man could have presided without any significant change in events.

When one examines Lucien's actions while addressing the troops who accompanied Napoleon, the conclusions are somewhat

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<sup>1</sup>Bainville, op. cit., p. 92.

different. Lucien's speech and the method of delivery he employed were quite essential to the success of the coup. His address which was meant to incite, employed all the tactics he had learned while in Jacobin clubs. It was dynamic and powerful. He used lies to provoke action, and he succeeded. His speech certainly demonstrates why he was considered such a fine orator. Lucien's gesture of pointing a sword at Napoleon's neck was the climactic gesture. A man vowing to kill his brother if he deprived people of their liberty generated too much emotion to be ignored. Lucien had saved the day not as he would have preferred, perhaps; but without him the outcome could have been quite different.

The course of history after Brumaire has relegated Lucien's actions to a somewhat minor role. One finds in Sorel the idea that Siéyès was the principle instrument of the coup.<sup>2</sup> Riétri, Lucien's biographer, feels that the French were ready for Napoleon, and that he (Napoleon) would have ultimately been successful without Lucien's assistance.<sup>3</sup> Lucien receives little, if any, mention in the memoirs of many of his contemporaries. The tendency, perhaps, might be to minimize the importance of Lucien's role because he is neglected; however, this is not right. Although Lucien's actions did occur quickly; this should not jeopardize the

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<sup>2</sup>Sorel, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>Riétri, op. cit., p. 108.

importance which he deserves for his part in making the coup successful.

The second question asks if Lucien acted as one might have expected; and if his actions were contrary to expectations, were there any logical reasons for such a shift? Prior to Brumaire, Lucien had been a man intensely concerned with justice and liberty. He was also ambitious which was demonstrated by his advancement in political circles while still quite young. For this reason, it should not be surprising that he became involved in the coup. One may ask why after so much expressed and silent resentment toward his brother, Napoleon, did Lucien become one of his supporters? My answer would be ambition. As Bainville says, "Il ne s'agit plus entre eux de rivalité. Il n'y a plus de Bonaparte militaire et de Bonaparte civil. Tous deux jouent leur destinée ensemble. ..."<sup>4</sup> If Napoleon was going to prove instrumental to the success of the coup, perhaps it was advisable to move with him instead of opposing him. In this instance, fraternal rivalries were replaced by the desire for success.

Vandal says, "Il aurait voulu se maintenir sur le terrain parlementaire et le dominer, presider à une transaction contre les Anciens et les Cinq-Cents. ..."<sup>5</sup> This is what he wished for, yet this is not what happened. Lucien had to summon military assistance, which at the beginning he

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Vandal, op. cit., p. 392.

opposed. He did not act as one might have expected for he was at the mercy of a group of irate men and he could do nothing without military assistance. When he threw off his robes and put down the insignia of his office, he bent before reality. He was a defeated man, a man made to witness his brother's elevation and his own personal destruction.

His speech to the troops was a continuation of the prostitution of his beliefs. In this speech, he had demonstrated not only his fine capabilities as an orator but also a complete reversal of beliefs. Lucien was a broken man, a man frightened by an infuriated gathering of men, a man who acted to save his life and that of his brother, a man not motivated by principles but by necessity. Lucien thrust his sword at Napoleon's neck to produce action; yet, more can be interpreted from this act. The military had shattered Lucien's dreams and at this moment Napoleon embodied the military forces. Lucien's threat was real yet never carried out. However, the threat forecast what relations were to be between the two brothers until Napoleon's death. Lucien was never again to bend to Napoleon or to the military. He prostituted his principles on the day of 19 Brumaire Year VIII, but was never to again.

Lucien was one of the heroes of Brumaire, yet he achieved this acclaim not as the man many had known, nor through the means he had desired. In victory, he had been defeated. In success, he experienced failure and what he had dreamed for was destroyed.



## EPILOGUE

what happened to the young man who was so instrumental to the success of the coup d'état of Brumaire? Six weeks after Brumaire (December 24, 1799), Lucien received from the Consuls (Napoleon Bonaparte, Roger-Ducos, and Abbé Siéyès) the appointment of Minister of the Interior. Relations between Napoleon and Lucien appeared to be quite congenial until October, 1800, when a small brochure entitled "Parallèle entre Cesar, Cromwell, et Bonaparte" was published under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. Lucien, himself, had not written this; however, he was responsible for the brochure came through his office, and on November 5, 1800, Napoleon demanded Lucien's resignation.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after this, Lucien was appointed as Ambassador to Madrid. His role as ambassador was not spectacular, yet Lucien did ~~enact~~ <sup>Conclude</sup> two treaties with Spain and presided over a convention while he was in Madrid. The first treaty, signed on January 29, 1801, was a treaty of alliance (between France and Spain) for invasion of Portugal if that nation did not consent to abandon its alliance with Great Britain. Signed on March 31, 1801, the second treaty was for the cession to France of Parma,

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Geer, Napoleon and his Family (Corsica-Madrid 1769-1809) (New York: Brentano's, 1927), p. 101.



Tuscany, and Louisiana. The convention held on February 13, 1801, dealt with the subject of land and sea operations against England and her colonies. While in Madrid, Lucien received many gifts (paintings and jewels) which in later years were to allow him to remain somewhat financially independent of Napoleon. This was fortunate since Napoleon and Lucien were to drift farther and farther apart.<sup>2</sup>

On May 25, 1803, Lucien married Alexandrine de Bleschamp. This woman was not of noble birth, and Napoleon was strongly opposed to the marriage for it would not enable him to acquire any additional territory in Europe. Lucien continually refused to divorce his second wife, and Napoleon was never able to forgive his younger brother for disobeying his desire. Geer feels that, "Napoleon's break with Lucien was one of the greatest mistakes of his career, he always displayed a certain jealousy of his brilliant but erratic brother who was the only person who ever antagonized his plans."<sup>3</sup>

Lucien arrived in Rome on May 6, 1804, and was not to return again to France until after Napoleon's fall, in 1815. Although no longer in France, Lucien was anxious to be farther away from his brother. After much difficulty in finding transportation, Lucien and his family arrived in England on December 12, 1810. He acquired Dinham House

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., pp. 122-124.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 174.

which was near the border of wales and which he owned until his death in June, 1840.<sup>4</sup>

On May 23, 1815, Napoleon issued a formal decree conferring on the Bonaparte family their new rights. Lucien and his family were excluded from any dynastic pretentions. Within the Almanach impérial supplément de 1815, the princes who were to be called to succeed Napoleon lost the name of Bonaparte and took that of Napoleon. One finds only the name of Lucien Bonaparte. A man who had aided in the coup of Brumaire which was Napoleon's first step toward becoming Emperor of France was ultimately to be excluded from the Imperial dynasty.

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Geer, Napoleon and his Family (Madrid-Moscow 1809-1813) (New York: Brentano's, 1928), p. 216.

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